

Saved By Grace

What does it mean to be saved by Grace?

In Matt. 1:21 we are told that Jesus will "save his people from their sins." The word 'save' means to deliver, to protect, to keep safe or to rescue from, so Jesus did not come to save us IN our sins or WITH our sins but to rescue us FROM our sins. In Rom. 7:24-25 Paul said, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? [and then he continued on to answer his own question saying,] *Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!*" So, in the same way that Jesus rescued Paul from his sinful body of death, He wants to rescue you and I from our wickedness so that we can live a holy life because "without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

Holy living comes through the Holy Spirit

In our own strength, it's not possible for us to live a holy life. Rom. 8:7 tells us that "the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." From this verse, we can see that it's not possible for us to keep God's laws so, without help, we will continue in sin. But God doesn't command us to do the impossible and then leave us helpless. He sends the Holy Spirit to live within us so that through the Spirit we have the power to resist sin and live righteously. Rom. 8:4 confirms this where it says, "the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit." Note that this verse says that by living according to the Spirit we can FULLY meet God's righteous requirements. So, in His Grace, God gives us His Spirit to save us from our sins so that we can meet His command to "be holy, because I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16).

A new heart

Before we were born again, we had hard hearts and did whatever we pleased. When our conscience convicted us of sin, we would often just ignore it and continue to sin to satisfy our lusts. But when we were born again, as well as giving us His Spirit, God gave us a new heart. In Ezek. 36:26-27 God says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." So, in His Grace, God not only puts His Spirit in us, He also replaces our heart of stone with a heart of flesh which will respond to the Spirit's leading.

The battle within

When the Holy Spirit enters our life, He strongly convicts us of sin by taking away our peace and making us feel very guilty (John 16:8). A spiritual battle begins between our sinful nature and the Spirit of God. Gal. 5:17 explains this where it says, "the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want." This is a very real and often painful battle which God wants us to win, and we will win if we live by the Spirit and repent of our sin whenever convicted. Gal. 5:16 tells us, "live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." The Holy Spirit works within us to guide and empower us to overcome any sin. Php. 2:13 says, "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." The following two passages speak of the Holy Spirit's work within us:

- ✧ 2 Pet. 1:3-4 say, "His divine power [the Holy Spirit] has given us everything we need for life and godliness [so that] you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."
- ✧ Tit. 2:11-14 say, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."

From these verses, we see that through God's Grace we can escape the corruption of the world and say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions and be redeemed (freed) from all wickedness. So, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can overcome our sinful nature and win the battle against sin.

Finally

Eph. 2:8 tells us that we are saved by Grace, through our faith.

Because of our faith, in His Grace God does the following. He -

- ⤴ Sends His Spirit to live within us
- ⤴ Continually wills us to act according to His good purpose
- ⤴ Gives us a new, soft heart so that we will respond to His guidance
- ⤴ Strengthens us so that we are able to obey Him

It's plain to see that apart from God's Grace no one can be saved from their sin. Without God guiding us, encouraging us, giving us a new heart and strengthening us to follow Him, we would all be lost. However, even though we are clearly saved by God's Grace, we are not totally free of responsibility. We have an obligation to live according to the Spirit as Rom. 8:12-14, 17 tell us:

v.12 *"Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation - but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.*

v.13 *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,*

v.14 *because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."*

- ⤴ Notice that in v.13 there are two ways in which we can live. We can live according to our sinful nature and die or we can live according to the Spirit and live.
- ⤴ Next, v.14 tells us that those who are led by the Spirit are sons of God and *"if we are children, then we are heirs"* (v.17).
- ⤴ It naturally follows that if we aren't led by the Spirit, but by our sinful nature, then we are not children of God and not heirs to eternal life.

Being led by the Spirit is simply responding to the Spirit's conviction and confessing/repenting whenever we are convicted. In His Grace, God has made it possible for us to obey His command to live a righteous life and 1 John 1:9 promises that if we confess our sins we will be forgiven and cleansed of all unrighteousness. 1 John 3:7 tells us, *"He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous,"* so it is up to each of us to do what is right and follow the Holy Spirit's leading if we want to inherit eternal life.

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